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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002986

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF:PDAS BELLAMY AND DAS PERRY; AF/W AND AF/RA  
NSC FOR MCLEAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PINS](#) [SL](#) [BU](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ARMY MINISTER DISCUSSES PKO PLANS,  
UNAMSIL, BENUE

REF: A. ABUJA 2653

[1](#)B. STATE 197866

(U) Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.5  
(a/b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: During a November 22 meeting with PolCouns and PolmilOff, Army Minister Batagarawa confirmed that Nigeria was planning to send an OFR Phase III battalion to Burundi. He also reported that Ghana probably would seek U.S. equipment support for its Burundi-bound battalion. Batagarawa was uncertain of the quality of UN support for Nigeria's UNAMSIL contingents, but said he would find out. The Minister also asked for details on the support that PAE has been giving. Finally, Batagarawa impugned Jukun militia for the violence against civilians in Benue, but said the GON would not speak publicly on the matter for fear of provoking further violence in Benue. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) PKO PLANS: Batagarawa said that since only two NIBATTS could go to Sierra Leone in December/January, the Ministry of Defense was considering sending the third OFR-trained battalion to Burundi. Responding to a suggestion that the third Nigerian OFR battalion could go to Sierra Leone in April and a different battalion to Burundi, he said he did not want to rotate a battalion from Sierra Leone to Burundi without that battalion having time back in Nigeria. Batagarawa said the GON planned to deploy a battalion to Burundi as soon as possible, since they had committed to send one before November 1. (COMMENT: This is contrary to MOD Danjuma's earlier statement to Ambassador Jeter that Nigeria would be one of the last to deploy, since Burundi is out of Nigeria's theater of operation and that South Africa should be the first to put troops on the ground (Ref A). END COMMENT.)

[1](#)3. (C) Batagarawa confirmed that Ghana and Senegal were also planning to participate in the Burundi operation. However, Ghana was concerned about equipment for its unit, and would likely seek an equipment package from the USG, similar to that provided through OFR.

[1](#)4. (C) UNAMSIL SUPPORT: In response to our query about the quality of UN support to the Nigerian troops in Sierra Leone, Batagarawa could not answer definitively, because he had heard nothing from his commanders on this issue. He asked for a list of the services PAE had been providing, and a copy of the UN/PAE Agreement. Batagarawa then said that he would do an assessment of whether the Nigerian battalions logistical needs were being met. Meanwhile, he said that he would seek information from within his Ministry.

[1](#)5. (C) 505 & MOI: The Army Minister, surprised the OFR Memorandum of Intent and 505 had not been completed, tried to get the MOD Legal Director on the phone. She was unavailable, but he said he would speak with her and provide PolMilOff an answer as soon as he could.

[1](#)6. (C) BENUE: PolCouns asked Batagarawa what had happened in Benue and what the next steps might be, stressing the importance of a transparent investigation of the killing of the 19 soldiers and the subsequent alleged killing of villagers by the military. Batagarawa implied that the reprisal violence against civilians was carried out by Jukun militia and not by the Nigerian military; nevertheless, the government had to proceed cautiously in its investigations because it did not want to do anything that might spark further violence. For example, any public statement by the GON that the military was not responsible might cause reprisals by the Tiv against the Jukun.

[1](#)7. (C) COMMENT: From the GON perspective, it is not

unreasonable to send an OFR battalion to Burundi. The Nigerian military is spread thin on external and internal missions, and the third OFR battalion is an already-formed and readied resource. Juxtaposed with UNAMSIL reaching its troop ceiling, the GON is seeking ways to meet all of its peacekeeping commitments. However, OFR was established to support ECOWAS participation in UNAMSIL, and the planned deployment to Burundi would take one of the seven OFR battalions far afield. That deployment, however, would still seem to meet a core U.S. objective of encouraging African-led peacekeeping operations.

18. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: Batagarawa's comments on Benue were intriguing. The Army Minister was sincere in his declaration that the military was not responsible for the recent reprisal violence in that state. However, his declaration is contrary to what we have heard from other reliable sources. Batagarawa's remarks indicate, however, that the GON likely will move slowly with its investigations and that concern now is that the investigation not have the unintended consequence of fomenting more violence in the still volatile Benue environment. END COMMENT.  
Jeter